

# *Practicing Pragmatist-Wittgensteinianism*

## **Introduction**

Much has been written on the continuities between Wittgenstein's later work and Pragmatism. Much of that writing has argued for there being strong continuity. Of those who see such strong continuity there are those who hold Wittgenstein to be the pre-eminent—even perhaps the superior—philosopher of the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus (e.g. Hilary Putnam), and others who see Wittgenstein as simply echoing some of what was said with more originality by C.S. Peirce, with the consequent diminution in clarity that echoes bring (e.g. W.V.O. Quine). What Quine and Putnam have in common, however, is the identification of note-worthy continuity, and in this they are far from alone (see James C. Edwards *Ethics Without Philosophy*, Richard Rorty *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, and many others).

We don't necessarily wish to dispute these. However, in a similar manner perhaps to with Wittgenstein's relationship to Freud, there are certain often downplayed aspects of the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus that considerably complicate the picture of continuity as it is so often presented. Indeed, one question to ask is whether the picture can survive—will its hold over us remain—once we've been furnished with certain reminders; that is to say, once we've been taught certain differences between Wittgenstein's philosophy and Pragmatism.

Back for a moment to Freud. It is now fairly widely accepted that Wittgenstein's philosophy is best understood as *therapeutic* and in being so is indebted to Freud and the therapeutic method he devised. Wittgenstein's philosophy is characterised as therapeutic in that he seeks to engage his 'interlocutors' (the scare-quotes are necessary, for the voices we hear in Wittgenstein's 'dialogues' / internal monologues might be representative of tendencies of his own, rather than of interlocutors) in dialogue such that he might facilitate their realisation that their disquiet stems from unconscious attachment to a picture of how things *must* be. For therapy to be successful, the interlocutor must freely come to acknowledge the picture as that which constrained their thinking and led to their disquiet. Once the picture has been brought to consciousness, it loses its power to effect psychological disturbance.

It is also widely known that Wittgenstein had deep distaste for other aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis: his theory of mind, and the scientific pretensions Freud had for that. So, there is a widely-acknowledged and -discussed tension in Wittgenstein's relationship to Freud and Freudianism: Wittgenstein believes the therapeutic method a mark of Freud's genius and constructs his approach to philosophy around that method; (while) he believes Freud's scientific tendencies disastrous and emblematic of the technocratic and scientific culture of his time (and ours).<sup>i</sup> In the case of Wittgenstein's relationship to Freud therefore, the relationship is only

superficially problematic. On inspection it bears up to scrutiny. For one can see the value of the therapeutic method without having to thereby accept Freud's metaphysics of mind and his scientific presentation of that metaphysics. But the cost of accepting this is to accept that the glass—of Freud's relation to Wittgenstein—is half-empty, as well as half-full: one has to be clear about the pretty vast differences between the two, if one is to get genuinely clear about the real similarity. The question we shall address in the next couple of sections of this paper is whether (or not) much the same is true of Wittgenstein in relation to Pragmatism.

### **Wittgenstein vs. James**

Returning our attention to Wittgenstein's relationship to Pragmatism, then, there *is* it seems a similar tension in evidence. For while James and Peirce seem to anticipate some of what one finds in the later Wittgenstein, one also finds Wittgenstein in his writings on the philosophy of psychology discussing William James in a seemingly highly-critical manner. Indeed, James is one of very few philosophers mentioned by name with any frequency in Wittgenstein's later work, and is so such that his words might form one strand—one pole, even—in Wittgenstein's therapeutic dialectic.<sup>ii</sup> Wittgenstein, therefore, had read James but chose to bring to the fore the latter's psychological writings as in need of therapy rather than to align himself with James' Pragmatism. Put another way: Wittgenstein saw James's

writings on psychology as giving voice to a tendency which was to be resisted, combatted.

There are two (closely-related) questions that might spring forth here.

1. Might one take Wittgenstein's remarks on James and treat them in isolation from any discussion as to the continuity so frequently identified between Wittgenstein and Pragmatism? On the one hand, this would be tantamount to saying that there is a Pragmatist William James who wrote on philosophy and a scientific William James who wrote on psychology. On the other hand, one might rather hold that Wittgenstein radically misread those psychological writings of James's, which Wittgenstein weaves into his therapeutic dialogue on the philosophy of psychology. Understood this way, James' writings on Psychology are continuous with his Pragmatism, only Wittgenstein misunderstood this inasmuch as he was sympathetic to Pragmatism. We find this latter option very implausible; given James' text and Wittgenstein's treatment of it, there is little scope for even the most revisionist of readings of James' psychological writings here. (In other words: we believe Wittgenstein's criticisms of James to be correct, in their fundamentals and in most of their details.)<sup>iii</sup> So: one is left it seems having to try to pry apart James's Empiricism from his

Pragmatism. (We have our doubts as to whether this task can be achieved.)

And

2. What is distinctly Pragmatic about James' philosophy and in what sense might we see Wittgenstein as inheriting it?<sup>iv</sup>

James's writings on psychology are distinguished by their empiricism rather than anything distinctively Pragmatic. Is Pragmatism at core empiricist in its leanings? There is much evidence to suggest so. Of course this will not come as a surprise to many. James and Dewey called themselves radical empiricists. So, one might ask, what's in a name..?

Let us quote a passage from James, which is taken from the opening lecture of his series of lectures on Pragmatism, wherein he seeks to explain the distinctiveness of the philosophical movement.

You want a system that will combine both...the scientific loyalty to facts and willingness to take account of them, the spirit of adaptation and accommodation, in short, but also the old confidence in human values and the resultant spontaneity, whether of the religious or of the romantic type. And this is then your dilemma: you find the two parts of your quaesitum hopelessly separated. You find empiricism with inhumanism and irreligion; or else you find a rationalistic philosophy that indeed may call itself religious, but that keeps out of all definite touch with concrete facts and joys and sorrows.

James wants to effect rapprochement between the language of empiricism and religious and ethical language, that is between what he sees as the respect for facts, found in the person of empiricist leanings and the respect for the passions, for the integrity of the immaterial found in the religious person. These can strike one as laudable aims. They are aims that have appealed to many who have become disillusioned with hard-headed (and often hard-hearted) materialist attitudes and their penetration in to every corner of modern life, including philosophy. The penetration can manifest a threat to the integrity of ethics, to the integrity of religious views, to the integrity of philosophy as a discrete discipline and ultimately to the integrity of that which is distinctively human.

Bells will be ringing for the Wittgensteinian. Should the Wittgensteinian allow herself to be summoned by those bells to the church of pragmatism? Many have suggested so. Rorty is most prominent in having suggested so; Putnam is a little more complicated, but no less prominent;<sup>v</sup> he too does in the end believe that the Wittgensteinian will find a deeply like-minded ally in the Pragmatists. We remain not so sure.

What is James advocating here in this quote? To be clear, the point is not that James wants to protect Christianity from scientific critique; nor is he advocating that Richard Dawkins become a regular recipient of the sacrament. Rather he is wanting to say that philosophy should acknowledge

the integrity of the different domains, and not fix its gaze on one at the expense of the other. What would such a one-sided diet amount to? Well, we need not speculate; we have Positivism, which came after James, to remind us what the consequences of philosophy fixing its gaze on science can do to the status of ethical language. In contemporary guise we have the work of those such as Paul E. Griffiths <sup>vi</sup> who wish to eliminate non-scientific language (read: language unsuitable for 'experimental' purposes) from the psychological lexicon. But should Wittgensteinians be Jamesians (and Pragmatists)? We would argue not... so fast. Not that there is no merit in James's desire to effect rapprochement between the empiricist mindset and the religious or ethical; more, that simple rapprochement is not what is needed here. What is needed is an understanding as to *why* these world views / mindsets seem to be in conflict; why it is that ethics feels (or is) threatened by science, why it is that those of an empiricist bent feel the need to attack ethical language or religious language. Such an understanding can only be effected by inviting the empiricist (including the empiricist in each and every one of us) to the therapy session, not by taking empiricism as it has been presented and trying to effect rapprochement between it (as presented by its adherents) and ethical or religious language (as presented by *its* adherents).

This is one important reason why we are ~~very~~ suspicious of the claim that James should be seen as an ally or progenitor of Wittgenstein.

For James does not question the underlying drive to ‘imperialism’ which is one of the hallmarks of empiricism: its yearning for an all-encompassing empiricist universe, where all language is amenable to playing an epistemological role, in the narrow empiricist sense of ‘epistemological’. To be sure, James wants to delimit its imperialist tendencies, and thus protect the integrity of ethical and religious discourse, but he does not get to the nub of the issue. He does not incline to tackling the tendency to imperialism at source. The reason is that for James the unacknowledged picture at the heart of empiricism remains unacknowledged (in James’s own thinking and writing). Empiricism’s underlying appeal remains subterranean and undimmed in James. This was one key reason why Wittgenstein wrote so critically about James.

And it is also why when James writes on matters psychological he writes as an empiricist. Here emotions are the experience of sensations or bodily changes, rather than the ways of taking the world in all its conceptual richness.<sup>vii</sup> It is these writings of James’s to which Wittgenstein addresses himself explicitly in his late manuscripts. James presents us as observers of our own inner states, those states—sensations—being the evidence for our having such-and-such an emotion.

There is then in James, and we find this in Peirce and Dewey (and in turn in Sellars and Quine and Davidson also), at best a too deferent approach to empiricism and at worst an embracing of empiricism aligned with a



myopia regarding the problems inherent to it. Pragmatism supposedly overcomes the subject-object dichotomy; but, in this connection at least, it does so (if at all) only at the unacceptably drastic cost of objectifying – thingifying – the inner, the subject, including the lived-body.<sup>viii</sup> As one sees in James's writing on psychology, there is a remarkably full-blooded embracing of empiricism, and to say that the eggshells of this way of thinking are still stuck to his attempts to produce a distinct philosophy in Pragmatism would be (probably too charitable) a way of capturing our misgivings in a way that paraphrases Wittgenstein's own concerns about some of his own earlier work. In short, while we find Pragmatism's maxim unobjectionable and consonant with Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy, we find the practice of the seminal figures in the history of Pragmatism to represent a failure to have fully broken free of the empiricist tendencies. Again quoting James, the maxim, or principle, is as follows:

A glance at the history of the idea will show you still better what pragmatism means. The term is derived from the same Greek word, meaning action, from which our words 'practice' and 'practical' come. It was first introduced into philosophy by Mr. Charles Peirce in 1878. In an article entitled 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear,' in the 'Popular Science Monthly' for January of that year. Mr. Peirce, after pointing out that our beliefs are really rules for action, said that to develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce: that conduct is for us its sole significance. And the tangible fact at the root of all our thought-distinctions, however subtle, is that there is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a

practical kind the object may involve--what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.

This clearly has resonance for Wittgensteinians and the prophylactic he offered by recommending responding to questions for the meaning of a term by looking at the term's use. But such similarities are superficial when one acknowledges the empiricism at the heart of pragmatism (and they are what led some Pragmatists, unlike Wittgenstein, toward behaviourism. Quine in this regard was only following a path already dangerously indicated by the Classical Pragmatists, beginning with Bain and Peirce.).

### **Wittgenstein vs. Peirce**

Hitherto we have focussed our attentions on William James. What of the other two founding figures of pragmatism, Peirce and Dewey? Let us deal with the founding figure of Peirce, so prominently mentioned in the quotation above. Parallels have been drawn between some of Peirce's remarks on meaning and use and some of Wittgenstein's; here again it is important to be clear about the status of some of the parallels being drawn. H.O. Mounce writes:

It is worth noting that there are striking resemblances between Peirce's theory of the sign and some of the **views** in Wittgenstein's later work. This is especially evident in the case of Wittgenstein's celebrated **argument** against the idea of a private language. A private language is precisely one in which there is a first sign. Thus Wittgenstein imagines that someone gives meaning to a sign 'S' simply by associating it with

one of his sensations. Thereafter he knows the correct way to take S, by recalling the original act of meaning. Here S is a first sign, since it derives its meaning simply from the relation between the individual's mind and its object, being unrelated to any other sign. Now Wittgenstein's criticism of this idea may be expressed in Peirce's terms by saying that meaning is not a dyadic but a triadic relation. On the idea of a private language, meaning is two-term. Thus the correct way of taking S is determined by a two-term relation in which the sign is related directly to an object. For Peirce and Wittgenstein meaning is **essentially** three-term. A term is related to an object only if there is *already* a correct way to take it. And only if there were already a correct way to take S could it be related to its object. (Mounce 1997 pp27-28; bolding ours)

It might strike some that Mounce has drawn some important parallels here; but he does so at great cost to any understanding of Wittgenstein as the radical philosopher he is. He attributes to Wittgenstein *views* and *arguments* and talks of Wittgenstein, along with Peirce, identifying the *essence* of meaning.

Let's take a look at what Wittgenstein actually has to say about meaning, in his later work. In the much cited passage 43 from *PI* Wittgenstein writes the following:

For a **large class of cases—though not for all**—in which we employ the word “meaning” it **can** be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.

And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*.

We have argued elsewhere <sup>ix</sup> that—rather than selectively interpret this passage, by ignoring the modals such as “can” and ignoring the last one-

sentence paragraph—one should take Wittgenstein at his word. While many have been tempted to see the phrasing of this remark as a combination of Wittgenstein's dispensable stylistic 'tics' and a definition of meaning, which therefore demands that the reader identify and remove the superfluous clauses and hedging strategies in order to extract the thesis ('Meaning is use'), we have argued something like the opposite. Wittgenstein is deliberately cautious in his wording precisely to guard against reading him as advancing the claim or the thesis that meaning is use.

Now, historically, there have been two paths proposed by those who have rightly resisted what we might call the 'theoretical selective reading' of this passage—the reading that seeks to overcome the clauses and modal operators so as to distil out a theory of meaning. The first of these alternatives has it that Wittgenstein identifies or essentially-connects the meaning of a word with its use. He does so so as to draw attention to the 'grammatical nexus' between the use of a word and the meaning of a word, such that if one asks for the meaning of a word one is generally satisfied with an account of the word's use. This approach, therefore, reads the phrase "the meaning of a word is its use in language" as a 'grammatical remark', rather than a hypothetical remark or expression of a philosophical theory. This one might call for shorthand the Oxford reading, as it emerges in the work of Kenny and Hacker, and is defended today by their students.

Both the theoretical reading and the 'Oxford' (or 'grammatical') reading might be treated as support for a reading of Wittgenstein and Peirce along the lines that Mounce wishes to read them (though it is debateable whether this is really entirely plausible with respect to the 'grammatical' reading). The reasons are that (as we've seen) Mounce wants to claim that Wittgenstein's account of meaning is the same as Peirce's, for both 'accounts' are, in Mounce's words, "essentially three term". Talking of the essence of Wittgenstein's account of meaning is rendered redundant when one observes that nowhere does Wittgenstein offer an account of meaning. Much less does he "argue" (Mounce again) for something being considered the "essence" (Mounce) of meaning.

How then might one (more successfully) read *PI* 43? Well, we recommend one reads it as something akin to a prophylactic: it is offered by Wittgenstein as something that might help you when faced with an otherwise vexing philosophical question. Consider the following:

**I have suggested** substituting for 'meaning of a word', 'use of a word', because *use of a word* comprises a large **part** of what is meant by 'the meaning of a word'...

I also **suggest** examining the correlate expression 'explanation of meaning'. ... it is less difficult to describe what **we call** 'explanation of meaning' than to explain 'meaning'. The meaning of a word is **explained by** describing its use.

It is a queer thing that, **considering** language as a game, the use of a word is internal to the game whereas its meaning seems to point to something outside the game. What seems to be indicated is that 'meaning' and 'use' are not equatable. But this is misleading.

(AWL 48 Emboldened emphasis is ours.)

In a similar vein, note also:

**An** answer to the question: ‘What is the meaning of a word?’ would be: ‘The meaning is simply what is explained in the explanation of the meaning’. This answer makes good sense. For we are **less** tempted to consider the words ‘explanation of the meaning’ with a bias than the word ‘meaning’ by itself. Common sense does not run away from us as easily when looking at the words ‘explanation of the meaning’ as at the sight of the word ‘meaning’. We remember more easily how we actually use it. (VoW p. 161. Emboldened emphasis ours)

We suggest that it is an error to read Wittgenstein as offering an “argument” for (any kind of theory whatsoever of) meaning, or (further) to be saying anything regarding the putative essence of meaning. In these two passages we find Wittgenstein writing that he *suggests* substituting for “meaning of a word” “use of a word”. He repeatedly writes “we” and “for us”: “we ask...”, “what we call...”; thus he indexes these locutions, these questions and conceptions, to ‘us’ and ‘we’, i.e. those who adhere to his conception of philosophy, ‘our method’ (cf. DS in VoW p.69). He writes of the meaning of a phrase being “*characterised by us*” (BB p. 65) as the use made of the phrase. These locutions fall well short of those which one might honestly characterise as indicating identity claims, regarding meaning and use.

The emboldened text in the three quotes (immediately above) should indicate that throughout his discussions of meaning Wittgenstein is very specifically talking about, and very specifically suggesting, a way of going on which will help one avoid confusion. There is something distinctly pragmatic

about this - but it is not so in the way Mounce wishes to argue regarding Peirce's theory of the sign. To bring this out, we need to first consider another quote from Wittgenstein:

The meaning of a phrase **for us** is **characterised** by the use we make of it. The meaning is not a mental accompaniment to the expression. Therefore, the phrase "I think I mean something by it", or "I'm sure I mean something by it", which we so often hear in philosophical discussions to justify the use of an expression is **for us** no justification at all. **We** ask: "*What do you mean?*", i.e., "How **do you** use this expression?" If someone taught me the word "bench" and said that he sometimes or always put a stroke over it...and that this meant something to him, I should say: "I don't know what sort of idea you associate with this stroke, but it doesn't interest me unless you show me that there is a use for the stroke in the kind of calculus in which you wish to use the word 'bench'". —I want to play chess, and a man gives the white king a paper crown, leaving the use of the piece unaltered, but telling me that the crown has a meaning to him in the game, which he can't express by rules. **I say: "as long as it doesn't alter the use of the piece, it hasn't what I call meaning"**. (BB p. 65)

As the last sentence here testifies, there is here, as many have noted, a strong parallel between Pragmatism and Wittgenstein's later work. However, as we have sought to bring out, one is puzzled if one expects there to be strong continuity throughout the writings of the key Pragmatists and Wittgenstein. The puzzlement can stem from two sources we have outlined here:

1. James departs from his own Pragmatist principles in his philosophical psychology and in his neutral monist version of empiricism: radical empiricism. Therefore, parallels between Wittgenstein and James need to accommodate this facet of James's work by seeing that when James appears in Wittgenstein's writings he does so as a voice in a

therapeutic dialogue, a voice in need of change or reflection. In other words, Wittgenstein sees James as highly-subject to metaphysical yearnings and in need of therapy. What we have suggested here however is that it is not that James' radical empiricism and his empiricist philosophical psychology are anomalous with respect to his Pragmatist principles but that the seeds of these views can be found in the way he lays out his Pragmatist principles. He is, crucially, too 'respectful' – too inheritative - of empiricism. In this sense one might say either that Wittgenstein completes the Pragmatist project or that Pragmatism was a stage in a dialectic which Wittgenstein brings to synthesis.

2. Failure to grasp in full the nature of Wittgenstein's radical approach to philosophy: his metaphilosophy. Failure to see the therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy leads one mistakenly to draw parallels at the level of substantive accounts or arguments. This is mistaken because in a significant sense there *are* no accounts or arguments in Wittgenstein's work. He does not offer an account of meaning, rather he *suggests* to us a *way of seeing* meaning which might help us when faced with philosophical problems which are generated from certain pictures of the meaning of meaning. Thus, even where Pragmatism and Wittgenstein seem most similar, there remains a



crucial difference in conception. Again, we think Pragmatism can learn from Wittgenstein here.

### **How to write most authentically about Pragmatism and Wittgenstein?**

So far, we have chiefly accentuated the negative. The glass is half empty. By our lights, there are significant—founding—strands in Pragmatism that are signally inferior to what we find in and is Wittgenstein's philosophy. But, as we mentioned at the outset of this essay, the glass has often been described also as being half-full; *and we don't necessarily want to deny this*. There are significant strands in Pragmatism that make it possible and fruitful to be a 'Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian'. We cite in the next footnote the works that we think best accentuate the positive: <sup>x</sup>.

Shall we try to triangulate the evidence? Shall we go through this mini-'literature', and come up with an overall verdict on that old and new question, 'Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist'? Shall we marshal and debate Wittgenstein's own (few) remarks on the topic? Shall we seek to determine once and for all whether this glass is half-empty or half-full?

Partly for *philosophical* reasons that we will elaborate on in a moment, we would rather leave any verdiction that may be called for hereabouts to the reader. We do not choose here to rehearse the reasons for thinking that the glass is after all half-full: we believe that they have, as we've said and referenced, been given at enough length by others before us. What we want to

do in the remainder of this piece, instead, is this: to write something that, rather than telling the reader ‘what’ Wittgenstein said and ‘what’ the Pragmatists said and where and how they most productively overlap, might actually take the debate on the possibility of ‘Pragmatist-Wittgensteinianism’ — and, more important, philosophy itself — and, more important, human life — forward, by doing rather than saying (Or by, if you like, showing rather than saying). In other words: once one has acknowledged the real tensions between Wittgenstein and Pragmatism (which we have spent most of the essay thus far setting out), then we think the best thing to do is to set out *how* (rather than what) there can after all be something genuinely important saving in the *practice* of their confluence.

For, after all: How can one write most *authentically* on the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus? To set out the things that they agree on would presuppose that they *have* opinions, views, positions, in the ordinary sense presumed and purveyed by most philosophers. But — at least for those of us wanting to take seriously that Wittgenstein was a ‘therapeutic’ thinker,<sup>xi</sup> who held philosophy to be an activity rather than a body of views or accounts no matter of what kind,<sup>xii</sup> and who had no opinions *qua* philosopher <sup>xiii</sup>; and wanting to take seriously that (as remarked above) Pragmatism — at least at its best — is a philosophy of and in practice, holding that beliefs *are* nothing other than the practices that they are embodied in,<sup>xiv</sup> and that the speculative and

spectatorial quest for certainty <sup>xv</sup> that previous philosophy has mostly been is forever beside the point—that would be an approach that by definition failed. We want now to try to *take* Pragmatism at its best, rather than accentuating the negative. We want in what follows to try to bring Pragmatism’s metaphilosophy / methodology closer to Wittgenstein’s (perhaps kicking and screaming? No matter). Our submission in fact is that one cannot, in the final analysis, write truly authentically on the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus (taking Pragmatism, at its best, as not having to be simply subject to Wittgenstein’s superiority and improvement-upon) except by writing authentically *as* a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian, or at least by seeking to do so and to understand what it really means to do so.<sup>xvi</sup> Writing, that is, in such a way as to take seriously the conception of philosophy that is actually present—manifest—in Wittgenstein’s philosophical activity, and in that of the best of Pragmatism, in Pragmatism once its (above-adumbrated) scientific weaknesses have perhaps been overcome or dropped.

The philosopher who has done the most to combine Pragmatism and Wittgenstein is, as we mentioned at the outset, Hilary Putnam.<sup>xvii</sup> Putnam is the best source for any conventional attempt to write accentuating-the-positive-ly on the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus. But that isn’t the most important thing that Putnam does, to bring Wittgenstein and Pragmatism together. No; the most important thing that Putnam does, in this regard, is to

*do philosophy as a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian*—it was of course he who coined this term. In other words: to seek to practice the bringing together of Pragmatism and Wittgenstein, not merely to preach it. To produce a *pragma* here, and a use—not merely a meta-discourse.

As Wittgenstein remarked: “Words are deeds”. We do not wish to produce a position-statement, a set of theses about ‘Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian philosophy’. We want to *do some work*.

In the remainder of this paper, then, we aim then to follow Putnam’s lead beyond where he has gone. We suggest that ultimately the only serious and worthwhile way in which to write on Wittgenstein-and-Pragmatism now is to move beyond the half-empty / half-full debate, and instead to (try to) do some philosophy genuinely in their spirit. Such philosophising, if it succeeds, will show/practice the Wittgenstein-Pragmatism nexus far better than it could ever be said.<sup>xviii</sup>

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The paper that we shall in fact take as our jumping-off-point in this enterprise is a perhaps-surprising one. It is a paper which might seem at first to have nothing to do with Wittgenstein or Pragmatism (let alone the two together) at all. We chose it, in part, precisely to show how very wide is the applicability of ‘Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian’ thinking. The paper in question is by Jerry Williams and Shaun Parkman, and its title is “On humans and environment:

The role of consciousness in environmental problems”.<sup>xix</sup> The paper uses “a framework derived from Schutzian phenomenology” (p.449) to explore some deep reasons why human beings create environmental problems – and to explore how these problems might be effectively addressed in a way that works with rather than against the grain of human consciousness and living.

Our primary intention, in the remainder of the present paper, is to explore what is right/helpful in the approach adopted by Williams and Parkman, and some of what is wrong with it, *as* would-be Pragmatist-Wittgensteinians. We aim to set out and to correct Williams and Parkman by extending their thinking in directions suggested, we believe, both by Wittgenstein and by Pragmatism at its best. We aim, in the process, to set out and *exemplify* how a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian approach to philosophy – a resolutely <sup>xx</sup> non-theoretical effort to take practice seriously – can help one to think therapeutically about our society and our environment and to clear the ground for pragmatic interventions therein that could actually work to heal it. In other words, our aim is to do no less than to think with you a solution to the central problem of our time: our (humans’) fairly-rapid and seemingly-inexorable collective destruction of our collective life-support mechanism. We think that Pragmatist-Wittgensteinianism will have more than earned its crust, if it can help to do this. And we think it can. If we are right, then this such would certainly deserve the Rortian honorific term, “edifying philosophy”.

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### **Wittgenstein-and-Pragmatism in practice: Everyday environmentalists**

Williams and Parkman argue that “human consciousness is characterized by a dialectic of environmental destruction. On the one hand, enabled by consciousness and scientific rationality, humans produce and externalise their being into the world thus creating environmental damage, yet on the other hand consciousness provides a risk of anomie so great that humans must internalise the social order and thereby make it taken-for-granted and a matter of common sense. Environmental destruction, then, finds its foundation in our very being.” (p.449) This we think is a helpful if desperately-concise summary. The point about internalising the social order is particularly important: it suggests a basis for a necessarily *political* aspect in how one sees society, whether phenomenologically or through another philosophical lens. There will be an unavoidable need in one way or another successfully to ‘bracket’ the taken-for-granted societal ideology, if one wants to achieve liberation from the built-in tendency to environmental damage indexed in this quotation. Liberal individualism, capitalist growthism—we need to find a way to make figural such implicit nativised ideologies, and not allow them simply to be the assumed ground of our existence, if we want that existence to continue, to be able to be sustained. (For these failing ideologies

and their associated naturalised-Newspeaks are the tacit metaphysics of our age.)

How is this to be done? Williams and Parkman claim: “To solve large-scale environmental problems we must transcend everyday thinking and the discourse of ideas. Effective solutions to environmental problems cannot be based in idealism; rather, they must be framed in very pragmatic ways—in terms of consequences and actions.” (p.456) <sup>xxi</sup>

Is this right? It is surely right that, to solve the kind of environmental problems that are assailing the world today, business-as-usual thinking cannot be merely tweaked. The *current* everyday ideologies (the very widespread assumption that growth is good; the ideology of ‘development’, etc) need to be transcended. A transformed thinking needs to become common-sensical. But, the Wittgensteinian in us protests that this change is *not* well-characterised simply as the transcending of “everyday thinking”. What is required rather is to find a way of *turning everyday thinking into naturally-environmental thinking* (and to preserve some capacity for thinking outside either of these ‘boxes’, the mainstream one or the environmental one; for such thinking will surely be needed again). The agenda then, surely, has to be one of creating a society of *everyday environmentalists*.<sup>xxii</sup> This process, so far as it concerns language, will begin with ‘watering the seeds’ of such thinking

in our language as we already find it: to give a very simple example, in the case of a catch-phrase such as 'Waste not, want not'; and in the very idea of 'waste' as something... wasteful, to be minimised (and, ultimately, one might even say, absurd. Nothing can be wasted, in a society that wishes to survive indefinitely in a finite world.<sup>xxiii</sup>). Of course, the process will have to concern myriad practical actions in the world too, with which our words inter-leave: such as the practice of getting to know our waste better, and finding endlessly-better ways of using it or of reducing it.

We need to bring a whole set of words back from their tacitly-metaphysical use (in which growth can be infinite, 'development' means industrialisation, 'rubbish' is thrown 'away' and not seen rather as resources, etc. etc.) to their (old-and-new) everyday use.<sup>xxiv</sup> How exactly is this to be done?

The attack on 'idealism' <sup>xxv</sup> in Williams and Parkman is surely on roughly the right track, in terms of explaining how it *won't* successfully be done. It is quite hopeless—hopelessly 'idealist(-ic)', hopelessly rationalistic—to simply tell people the facts about looming environmental catastrophe and expect them to respond rationally and problem-solve the coming catastrophe away. It is hopeless to adopt *any* strategem which relies centrally only upon changing individual 'hearts and minds', not collective practices and 'language-games'.<sup>xxvi</sup> Furthermore, as Williams and Parkman rightly put it, "Effective



solutions to environmental problems...must be framed in very pragmatic ways—in terms of consequences and actions.” Yes; without pragmatism, here, we are lost; *provided* that the *deep* ‘framing’ of such problems is alive to life. That is to say: environmental pragmatism is entirely appropriate, *on the back of* a profound commitment both linguistic, practical etc. to seeing ourselves as part of our ecosystem, etc. .<sup>xxvii</sup> That is to say, once again: We need to forge a new everyday thinking. An environmentalist (better still: an eco-logical) everyday thinking.

Read (2004) argues that the deep affinity between Dewey and Wittgenstein in respect of their being ‘deflationary naturalists’<sup>xxviii</sup> and ‘cultural naturalists’<sup>xxix</sup> is best taken now and extended in the direction of ... ‘environmentalism’.<sup>xxx</sup> That is to say, that we best understand ourselves as throughandthrough naturally cultural animals, if we understand our *coping* with the world, our being ‘internally-related’<sup>xxxi</sup> to it rather than spectators of it, our being always-already doers, through the lens of environmentalism (or, better still, ecologism). We are part of our ecosystem,<sup>xxxii</sup> and this is of great philosophical and ethical and political meaning.

It can seem shocking to suggest that the James, Dewey and Wittgenstein be cast as (everyday) environmentalists. For we are accustomed to thinking of ‘environmentalism’ as a political category, and of philosophers as above

politics. This widespread notion is however multiply flawed. Firstly, the whole point of the argument indexed in the previous paragraph is that one cannot make any sense of supposing creatures such as ourselves to exist except as utterly dependent upon and in an important sense therefore utterly immersed in our environing circumstances. Secondly, the merest common-sense for the species, of survival, *ought* to make environmentalism, i.e. the sense that everyone is ‘downstream’ of everyone else, into something that is genuinely basic for all politics, rather than being politically controversial. It is their not yet being common-sensical that makes things appear ‘political’ in some problematic and controversial way; what is needed is a politics that successfully acts so as to render the ideology of ecologism, an Earth-based ideology, part of the *ground*, rather than figural. Thirdly, given that our societies are so tragically far from such far-sightedness, there is no way that being ‘politically controversial’ can be avoided—in making the transition to a thinking and a conducting of ourselves as if tomorrow truly mattered. And fourthly, it is in any case misguided to fantasise philosophy as would-be politically-neutral.<sup>xxxiii</sup> This fantasy, fairly widespread in the English-speaking world, but much less attractive on the Continent (and of course directly contested in Dewey’s *corpus*, and also in Cornel West <sup>xxxiv</sup>), is based upon a resistance to thinking deeply about the ‘therapy’ that our culture needs to go through, the changes that are required if it is to be truly assertible that we love wisdom and act accordingly. The drive toward depoliticisation of as much as

possible is itself an aspect of the 'liberal' philosophy of mutual indifference that precisely requires challenging, if these changes are to occur.

Still, it might seem ahistorical or anachronistic to take Wittgenstein and the Pragmatists in the way we are suggesting. Doesn't Dewey for instance rely on a Baconian (instrumentalist, dangerously hyper-'disenchanted') starting-point in much of his philosophising? <sup>xxxv</sup> To some extent, yes. But what the present essay has become (about), as explained above, is not a scholarly effort to establish with historical validity exactly where these thinkers stood at the time on the philosophical issues of their time. (We have already made clear that we regard Classical Pragmatism as multiply flawed, in this connection.) It is primarily rather an attempt to understand what it could mean now to be a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian. The Owl of Minerva may indeed have long flown for certain of Dewey's more Baconian (nature-cutting) formulations; we think it certainly has. But we think that the confluence of a Pragmatism and Wittgensteinianism for our time *can* nevertheless be very fertile. The test of a philosophical approach is what it can offer living philosophy, and (more broadly) living. That is what we are attempting to prove, to test, now.

Williams and Parkman remark that "The idealism of modern environmental discourse holds little promise for the remediation of large-scale environmental problems." (p.456). This is true, inasmuch as such discourse

often simply abstracts from or ignores or speaks down to the everyday lived experience of many people, at least in the West / North of the world, which is mostly felt in everyday life as relatively unaffected by environmental impoverishment, let alone catastrophe (Crisis? What crisis?).<sup>xxxvi</sup> Furthermore, the danger of such discourse is that it frequently abstracts *from* our lived embeddedness in the world, and so can too-easily suck us into a search for techno-fixes and other sticking-plaster-solutions to what are deep problems of consciousness and way of life. For we are (or: need to be) looking for a practicable way of living that is cotenable with such living continuing, and with a sufficient valuing of life (not just one's own) that will enable this.<sup>xxxvii</sup> If we fail to act on the (Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian) truth of our co-constitution with the world, if we fantasise ourselves as outsiders to that world, if we fantasise ourselves as quintessentially thinking or gazing individuals (as so much philosophy has done), then we will aim, hopelessly and disastrously, to intervene in the world as if *from the outside*, crudely and without awareness of the full complexity and subtlety of the system 'into' which we are intervening.

And Williams and Parkman rightly point up (p.455, p.457) the dangerous tendency for intellectuals to overly assume that explicit thinking, theoretical insight etc. is a potent influence upon society, when typically it is quite marginal (much as one might regret that fact). It is the philosopher's *déformation professionnelle* to believe that he (it is still usually a 'he') is a figure

who ought to be and surely will be listened to, in the society in question. The role of explicit theory / metaphysics is played up, in the course of such belief; our practical engagement in the world and the assumed linguistic and psychological tools that constrain and enable that engagement are played down. ...*Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian thinkers stand this appealing misconception on its head.* We place the deed first; we return over and over to actual practice. Thus Wittgenstein famously agreed with Goethe's remark that "In the beginning was the deed", and, once more, 'Pragmatism' as a term comes of course from the Greek word, "pragma", meaning: deed. (And thus our title: for, in point of fact, how could one really think Wittgenstein-and-Pragmatism at all, *except* in practice?)

But then doesn't that, even if it is more realistic than one or another 'idealist' fantasy, leave us simply having to accept our impotence? Take one of Williams and Parkman's central two recommendations, on how we ought to intervene so as to create an effective environmentalism:

[L]arge-scale environmental problems like global warming can be translated into immediate consequences...by addressing them at their foundation, the consumptive behaviour of individuals. ...[F]or example...the cost of fossil fuel paid by Americans only represent[s] a small share of their actual cost when scarcity and environmental damage are considered... If those who use fossil fuels were to pay the true cost (enabled by green taxes), consumptive behaviour would change as a matter of economic necessity. Suggestions that urban commuters should pay a "commuting tax" to account for their consumptive behaviour is also an example of a pragmatic, consequence driven mechanism of environmental change... In these cases change

occurs when consequences accrue, and consequences accrue when they are linked to our consumptive behaviour, behaviours such as buying gasoline and commuting by automobile. (p.458)

All true enough; but now who is being idealist? Williams and Parkman are; for they have merely pushed the problem back one stage, but have not acknowledged this. For how do we generate the political willpower to put policy instruments such as these into place? How is a democracy (a society in which the people genuinely rule)—or even a command society (for commands are useless unless they are obeyed)—to summon the will to put in place measures in response to what Williams and Parkman have themselves pointed up as the still rather abstract nature of the threat, and given that a society built around the needs of the motor-car now seems normal and “just how it is”? (p.454)

To a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian, it is obvious (as it should be to all—but philosophers often have to re-learn what is obvious<sup>xxxviii</sup>) that we have to have in mind (and be able to communicate) a workable way to get from *here* to *there*. Thus there is a pressing need for a movement (more likely: a movement of movements) that will take actions that will help to make the new world seem possible, *and* will help to make the new world be actual. For example: using and strengthening and lobbying for alternatives to the motor car, and starting to make these the norm, the taken-for-granted, the everyday. This

will require vast alterations in everything from our planning system to our cultural icons. The needful change in consciousness to motivate and then to constitute this must itself be fostered, and pursued at first on fertile ground. Just as Marx looked for the class that would be best-placed to see reality and to fight for a future in which that reality would be different, so must we. One such 'class' is perhaps parents and children – for it is children upon which the burdens of an environmentally-wrecked future will fall hardest.

This movement of movements is to some extent in existence, already.<sup>xxxix</sup> What the Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian can do, as more or less what Foucault called a 'specific intellectual', is to work with it, and help it flourish and avoid the many pitfalls (intellectual and otherwise) inevitably close to any transformative project. This is neither 'idealism' nor philistinism; it is a bold, but realistic, and pragmatic approach.<sup>xl</sup> It is, we believe, true philosophy, today.

Language and practice can be transformed from within. To create the new out of the old, we will need to work relentlessly to expand the 'vanguard' of those whose consciousness is already raised, to use linguistic reframing<sup>xli</sup> and 'non-linguistic'<sup>xlii</sup> tools and strategems to change the everyday into an eco-logical everyday; in sum, to start to make commonsense compatible with continued existence.

This will be a vastly difficult enterprise, in part for the reasons explored by Williams and Parkman. But we have the right to believe that it can be done; this is what is implicit in James's great paper "The will to believe".<sup>xliii</sup> The need of others (and of ourselves) for us to do this, to believe (and then to act), is internally related to our human – individual and social - power to make things possible (by virtue of believing that they are / can become possible) that would otherwise not be possible.<sup>xliv</sup> James, like Wittgenstein, is philosophically revolutionary in considering philosophical issues throughout *from the point of view of the agent(s)*.<sup>xlv</sup> Such agent-centred thinking is why the philosophies it co-constitutes are not in the end statable as doctrines or theses – it is itself a central reason why we are taking the approach that we are in this essay. Of not trying (pointlessly, even counter-productively) to say what Wittgenstein and Pragmatism *say*, but rather, *doing*.<sup>xlvi</sup> And our point now is: what needs to be done, in order to engender the transformations of discourse and action that becoming a society of everyday environmentalists will entail, crucially requires just this same sense of (collective) agent-centredness. A greater sense of possibility than is delivered in the pessimism of Williams and Parkman, and of so much of the present scientific, techno-fixing, consumeristic world-view, which encourages people to inoculate themselves against the hope that real change could come. The antidote to (self-fulfilling) pessimism concerning the likelihood that we can collectively make the



changes that truly becoming an everyday-environmentalist culture will entail, in other words, can in part be found precisely in being inspired by the agent-centred philosophical thinking of the likes of James and Wittgenstein. We can individually and collectively become autonomous with regard to norms of waste, mutual indifference, short-sightedness of our temporal horizons etc, through following the example of liberation offered in Wittgenstein's thought and of hope offered in James's, against the background of the understanding of ourselves as thoroughly inter-dependent and environed that is so prominent throughout Wittgenstein and Dewey. If we intelligently look for allies and 'classes' for which such thinking should make sense, if we work to expand the 'vanguard' of those who see the coming cataclysm with open eyes and open hearts, then the job can be done.

This paper in itself – the writing on these pages - could not possibly be enough, however brilliant it was (is) and however widely read it might be. It needs to be '*completed*'-- by you, and by many more. In part, in action, including in actions that we do not anticipate and perhaps would not in some cases even welcome. For Wittgenstein, the deepest meaning of philosophy being a 'therapeutic' enterprise is that the reader / the listener needs truly to enter into the conversation. You need to *recognise* yourself in all this; to assess as you go along your resistances to it and its 'cathexes' for and with you. This isn't in the end about us addressing you, the reader; it is about you actually

experiencing what we are ‘talking about’ this in the paper. Philosophy is an activity – philosophy that is written down *is* only philosophy waiting to be read and resisted and welcomed and reworked. Reconstructed, renewed. Similarly, the deepest meaning of the agent-centredness and action-centredness (rather than being spectatorial or theorist) of Pragmatist philosophising is that the deed that is done here depends in part on – is to some degree perhaps even *constituted* by - the deeds that are done in response to it. Beginning with the reader’s commitment to the ‘proposals’ presented here; proposals, initially drawn from our reading of Williams and Parkman, concerning the need to remould our everyday worlds of expectation, action, norm and emotionality. We submit that the way that we (humans) *take* the world needs to change – now it is over to you (to us collectively), to think-and-feel this through, and then perhaps to undertake a segment of that re-taking.

By our lights, a work of philosophy, like a work of art, aims to be a therapeutic work, and this means that it speaks with rather than at the reader. If it speaks *to* the reader, then that is because the reader finds herself in it. All true philosophy is a deed, a *pragma*; but the deed is not the author’s (or the authors’) alone.

**Anthropogenic global warming as a diffuse object**

So how might this look. One of the problems with motivating ourselves (as a society, as a species) to make the changes required to mitigate or prevent climate catastrophe, changes such as the radical change in our cultures required to move to a low carbon or carbon free economy, is that the problem of anthropogenic climate change is so diffuse. There is no clear object for us to fear, and fear needs an object. Therefore, even for those who understand the threat posed by anthropogenic climate change the understanding stays at what one might call an unfelt level. Put another way, fear of a threat to one's existence is a characteristically emotional response. We round the corner while walking in the Pyrenees and are confronted by a bear, and our instinctual fear brings about or is an emotional response. How one characterises this emotional response, explains it, has been the subject of much discussion. A discussion in which James played a hugely influential role. Contemporary philosophy of emotions can usefully be seen as divided into two camps<sup>xlvi</sup>. In one camp are the Jamesians (or neo-Jamesians) and in the other the cognitivists (or judgementalists).<sup>xlvi</sup> The term "cognitivism" brings together writers on emotions, some of whom might be termed *pure* cognitivists: e.g. Sartre, Solomon (1976 & 2003c), Taylor (1985) and Nussbaum (2004); and some of whom might be termed *hybrid* cognitivists: e.g. Goldie (2000) Greenspan (1993) Nash (1987) and Stocker (1987). (Roughly: 'pure' cognitivists believe that emotions are beliefs; while 'hybrid' cognitivists believe that they are belief/bodily-feeling admixtures, and that beliefs etc.

alone are not enough to explain them. ‘Hybrid’ cognitivists thus can easily appear the sensible ‘middle-ground’ between the ‘excesses’ of a James or a Sartre. But our thought here is that Jamesianism (and Cognitivism) need to be brought into the therapy session; not just ‘happily’ / ‘merrily’ melded together.)

What of those who build upon James’s groundbreaking work? The neo-Jamesian camp comprises philosophers and psychologists who advance a contemporary variant of James’s account of emotion and in doing so often align themselves with the research program initiated by Darwin ([1872] 1965) and later Ekman (1972); those Darwinian claims are often supported by theoretical claims drawn from neuroscience and cognate theories of mind: e.g. Damasio (1994), Prinz (2004) and Robinson (1995).

In short, cognitivists take emotions to be centrally, and explain them in terms of, appraisals, judgements or evaluative beliefs; neo-Jamesians explain emotions in terms of awareness of bodily changes, usually patterned changes in the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). How the debate is polarised can be captured by returning to a passage from William James’s paper in *Mind*, published in 1884, a passage frequently quoted and/or referred to by those on either side of the debate.<sup>xlix</sup>

Our natural way of thinking about ... emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary is that *the bodily changes follow*

*directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.*<sup>1</sup>

(James, 1884: 190-191. Emphasis in original)

This is of course James in Empiricist mode 'rather than' Pragmatist. However, we will not dwell further on this kind of point here; we dwelt on it plenty earlier in our essay. Rather we wish to show how a Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian (or better, Wittgensteinian-Pragmatist?) approach to this debate might help and in turn throw light on bringing about genuine change.

On a (neo-)Jamesian account one might characterise the fundamental problem facing humanity today thus: the threat posed by anthropogenic global warming (AGW) and explained to us by climate science via various media just does not provide the environmental triggers so that our physiological response (sensations, changes in the ANS) might be triggered and which emotional responses on a Jamesian account are the awareness of. Now, if one takes a purely Jamesian approach hereabouts, then there is nothing we can do about this but wait until there is an event of such magnitude and which is unequivocally climate-change related which will serve as an environmental trigger (Or we can try to mimic such an event by means of scaring people witless via artistic renditions of possible futures, etc.). Now the problem with such a sit-and-wait approach is that once waiting for such an event might be to wait until it is too late (to prevent fatal runaway over-heating).

On the cognitivist account it seems difficult to make sense of our inaction. The science is unequivocal, the precautionary principle invokes rational grounds for acting now, yet we are simply failing to act in any meaningful way. Surely an understanding of the science would lead to a forming of the evaluative beliefs such that one would fear the consequences of failing to act to mitigate climate change and thus take action to avert that

fear<sup>li</sup>. Yet fear it seems is lacking. Now, there is one point worth raising here and that is that fear, like many emotions, can often lead to a form of paralysis and this could be what is happening, but our suggestion to follow will meet this point also. For now what we wish to highlight is that the threat posed by AGW is one we need to feel in an emotionally engaged way if we are to be motivated to act rationally to mitigate it before it is too late.

So, our problem is this:

1. If we're Jamesians, then we sit and wait, because until there are the environmental triggers to initiate our physiological response to AGW we will not be in a position to acknowledge the threat in an emotionally engaged way (one might say in the Cavellian sense of the term, 'acknowledgement', as must acknowledge one another, and not merely 'know' (about) one another) and thus will not be motivated to act until it is likely too late to avert catastrophe.
2. If we are cognitivists, then we seem to have no way of accounting for the current inaction: the ingredients are there for us to form the requisite evaluative beliefs but they either remain unformed or they are formed in a peculiarly detached and unemotional way.

The problem we suggest is the problem of diffuse objects. Our emotional/psychological makeup as human beings seems prejudiced in favour of simple objects with which we are directly acquainted. The threat posed by AGW, though no less real, is something akin to a threat that we might characterise as having a complex diffuse object. Does this mean, as many have argued, that cognitivism is wrong, and that we must give ourselves up to the truth in Jamesian approaches to these matters. As we noted, doing so would be to simply sit and wait for an environmental trigger. Thus, probably, to merely *wait* for our predictable doom.

**Conclusion: 'World-taking cognitivism'**

There is a true middle way here (Not the bet-hedging middle-ground — which does not therapeutically reconceive the terrain — of ‘hybrid’ cognitivism, which still thinks in terms of propositional beliefs). One might invoke a more nuanced, methodologically-radical version of cognitivism: What one of us has dubbed ‘World-Taking Cognitivism’ (see Hutchinson 2008 for a full treatment).

World-taking cognitivism is offered both as a possible framework for understanding and as itself directly a therapeutic device. It *is* a pragmatic strategy for aiding us to overcome tensions in our thinking about certain matters. The idea is that emotions are ‘world-taking’ to the extent that, to a large degree, they are answerable to the way the *meaningful* world *is*. In this sense this framework enables one to see that, *contra* James, emotions are cognitive to the extent that they are not truly characterised as passive: something that afflicts the being. For our emotions are neither truly passive (affective, James) nor plainly chosen by us (judgements, Solomon and Sartre), nor even some blended combination of the two. Emotions are ways of reading and of taking (grasping) the world; more precisely they are ways in which we acknowledge loci of significance in the world. Our taking of the world is enabled through our conceptual capacities: our second nature. Thus given our nature, our *Bildung*, the loci of significance bear in and down on us. We are both answerable for our emotions and subject to them.

Important proviso: The term cognitivism/cognitivist is employed here in the way in which it is so in metaethics and thus does not imply any appeal to 'the cognitive sciences'. The term is not used, therefore, to denote the existence of cognitive processes. This is how we as Wittgensteinians are comfortable to speak of an -ism, and a Cognitivism at that, that we endorse; whereas obviously much of what 'Cognitive Science' calls 'Cognitivism', we would reject.<sup>lii</sup>

Thus none of this amounts to the advancement of a philosophical theory of emotion. "World-taking cognitivism" is merely a suggestion as to a pragmatic way of seeing our relationship to our world and to others through a reflection upon our conceptual capacities and the internal relations holding between concepts, on occasions of use.

Let us elaborate this final remark. Identifying the relations holding between concepts, such as those between fear and threat, is not to propound a theory. It is to describe how the grasping of one concept might need to carry with it, in a particular context, another. That is to say, grasping fear entails, on some occasions, in some contexts, also having grasped the concept of threat, maybe the concepts of vulnerability, fragility, &c. . Invoking concepts as internally related is simply a perspicuous way of noting, describing, the nature of our conceptual capacities. Let us take another example: Saying of someone that they have grasped the concept of 'fire' entails that we predicate of them that they have also grasped the concepts of, say, 'heat' and of



'burning'. For a person who employed the word 'fire' while unable to demonstrate that they knew that fire burns and that fire generates heat would just not be able to make standard linguistic moves with the word 'fire'; in the absence of a grasp of the concepts of 'heat' and of 'burning' a person is not correctly described as having grasped the concept of 'fire'.<sup>liii</sup> Again, we here merely invoke the truism that goes somewhat grandiosely by the name of the identity theory of truth. One has grasped the concept of fire if and only if one has in fact grasped the concept of fire. Not knowing that fire is hot, that fire burns, is to fall short of fulfilling one side of the equation; thus one has failed to grasp the concept.

Now, one can employ the word 'fire' in some contexts and on some occasions whereby the internal relation between it and, say, 'heat' does not hold, to the extent that the relation is not active on that occasion of use. One significant difference between a concept such as 'fire' and one such as 'fear' is the level of cultural specificity demanded, the number of concepts with which it can be internally related and the level of occasion sensitivity demanded for the internal relations to hold or be active. The internal relations that might hold on an occasion between 'fear' and other concepts such as 'threat', 'anxiety', 'human needs', 'hope', 'pain', 'love', do so only given a (greater) degree of cultural specificity: a specificity regarding the enculturation of the expresser of fear: the afraid person. The cultural specificity demanded by fear is much less than that demanded by an emotion such as shame, but it is still

something that can operate at the cultural level, or in response to a meaningful world, and not merely at the brute causal level (See Hutchinson 2008, chapters 3 and 4).

To return us to our problem. What is required to motivate action is an engaged acknowledgement of the problem we face. The problem, of how to stop the planet burning—in being complex and diffuse—seems to fall short of bringing about such a response, and both (standard) cognitivist accounts of emotion and Jamesian empiricist accounts do not help us to understand and effect the required change. ‘World-Taking Cognitivism’ helps in the sense in which it rejects the Jamesian implication that emotions are passive (essentially affective) while also providing a way of understanding how they might be responses to a meaningful world without inferring from that that they are chosen.

What might this do for us in practical terms? Well it might tell us how best to frame the way in which we communicate the threat, so that it brings about the integrated engaged response we require (And here one might return to the discussion begun in the “Everyday environmentalists” section, above). It might show us the kind of *cultural pre-requisites* for individuals being in a position whereby and wherein they acknowledge the threat (And now one can see more clearly how and why Williams and Parkman’s approach is in the end clearly inadequate; for they have not engaged in such reflection or in such cultural examination.)

Let us draw an analogy with the notion of prejudice. We noted above that there seems to be a prejudice built into us whereby complex diffuse objects (e.g. threats that are not before us and which are a concatenation of different smaller non-fear-invoking-threats spread over time but ultimately comprising a threat of huge magnitude) do not seem to bring about our acknowledgement of them as threats in the engaged emotionally-integrated manner that would bring about fear and motivate action. What is required therefore is not mere stating of the current scientific facts about the AGW, but rather a shift in the culture and in our practices, for currently our culture has led to a deep seated prejudice (a judgement formed in advance of the facts and which remains largely untouched once the facts are in) in favour of certain dogmas which mitigate against acknowledgement of the threat and mitigating the threat. The dogmas are legion and often mentioned but the important point we wish to convey here, as Wittgensteinian-Pragmatists, is that what is required are strategies *whereby we might collectively be brought to a position whereby we acknowledge these deep-seated ways of taking the world as contingent 'pictures' of the world.*<sup>liv</sup> And thus can we start to midwife the new world, one in which our world-takings are healthier, and thus in which we (as a species, as one among many) can be sustained, through-and-through envired more self-consciously and securely.

The emotional transition might be one of (first) shame at our realisation that we have suppressed our acknowledgement, based on unconscious

commitment to these dogmas (the world as disposable resource for human use, the world as object (and us as subjects), economic growthism, consumerism, materialism, short-termism, liberal individualism and so on) and (second) fear as we come to perceive and acknowledge the magnitude of the threat.

Assenting that shame and fear will be a first step away from the abyss, and toward true human flourishing.

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1975 *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*

1980 *Culture and Value*

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<sup>i</sup> See Bouveresse for extended discussion of this seeming tension in Wittgenstein's relationship to Freud.

<sup>ii</sup> See Stern 2004 and Hutchinson and Read 2005 for more on Wittgenstein's employment of dialogue and dialectic in his therapeutic practice.

<sup>iii</sup> It is worthy of note that James is the doyen of empiricists in the philosophy of emotions, who often term themselves Jamesians (or Neo-Jamesians). See Hutchinson, *Shame and Philosophy*; and the closing sections of the present paper.

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<sup>iv</sup> Hilary Putnam's work on dissolving the fact-value dichotomy and the reason-emotion dichotomy (see especially his 2002) can be helpful here, in making possible Pragmatist-Wittgensteinianism, rather than just an opposition between classical Pragmatism on the one hand and Wittgenstein on the other.

<sup>v</sup> Others too are legion, for an indicative sample see n.viii below, and the bibliography of Malachowski's *The new Pragmatists*.

<sup>vi</sup> See his *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories*

<sup>vii</sup> See the chapters 3 and 4 of Hutchinson, *op.cit.*, for detail.

<sup>viii</sup> We are thinking here for instance of *PI* 293 and 339. There is absolutely no anticipation in James of Wittgenstein's 'grammatical' reminders concerning the profound difference between the 'inner' and the 'outer'. To the contrary.

<sup>ix</sup> See especially our "Towards a perspicuous presentation of 'perspicuous presentation'", in *Philosophical Investigations*.

<sup>x</sup> *Wittgenstein and William James*, by Russell Goodman.

*The Legacy of Wittgenstein: Pragmatism or Deconstruction*, edited by Ludwig Nagl and Chantal Mouffe.

"Wittgenstein's philosophy in relation to political thought", by Alice Crary.

These works by Richard Rorty:

*Philosophy and the mirror of nature* 1979 Princeton

*Consequences of Pragmatism* 1982 Minneapolis: U. Minnesota Press – especially the first two chapters.

And these works by Hilary Putnam:

*Realism with a Human Face*. Edited by James Conant. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

*Renewing Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

*Words and Life*. Edited by James Conant. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994, including see especially Conant's Introduction.

*Pragmatism: An Open Question*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, especially chapter 2, "Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?".

*The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

"What Is Pragmatism?" With Richard Rorty and James Conant. *Think: Philosophy for Everyone* 8 (Autumn 2004): 71-88.

<sup>xi</sup> See e.g. Hutchinson and Read (2010).

<sup>xii</sup> See e.g. *Tractatus* 4.112, and Hutchinson and Read (forthcoming).

<sup>xiii</sup> See e.g. p.103 of Wittgenstein's (1975).

<sup>xiv</sup> We are here drawing upon and extending the following famous statement of Peirce's, concerning: "Bain's definition of belief, as "that upon which a man is prepared to act." From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary; so that I am disposed to think of



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him [Bain] as the grandfather of pragmatism.” For the full source and a detailed treatment, see e.g. <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3750480>

<sup>xv</sup> See e.g. Dewey’s (1933). Peirce and Dewey argued powerfully that certainty is simply not required for – and is in a certain important sense irrelevant to – knowledge. Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* can be seen as close indeed to this vein of Pragmatist thought.

<sup>xvi</sup> Or at least, by trying and failing, or alternatively: by setting out why such failure is (some might hold) inevitable).

<sup>xvii</sup> For all his own innovativeness and brilliance, Rorty himself was the first to acknowledge, modestly, that Putnam, rather than he (Rorty) himself, deserved this laurel. (Lectures heard by and personal communications with Rupert Read.)

<sup>xviii</sup> It will, we trust, not overly surprise the reader to learn that we do not have in mind under the heading ‘showing’ here the fake-showing – a showing which is actually merely disguised-saying – that has until recently dominated interpretation of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy. Rather, what we have in mind is showing that is forever best showing. That isn’t a stand-in for something true but unsayable resting immediately behind it. What is shown in our paper is what the arrangement that our paper effects shows, no more and no less. No more would we demand that a good poem must covertly say what it shows and should be translatable into that ‘message’, nor that a visual work of art (e.g. a picture that is not merely another way of saying some words) could or should be similarly translatable. And here a key remark of Wittgenstein’s is this: “Philosophy ought really to be written *as a kind of poetry*” (1980; p.24; translation emended for idiomaticity).

<sup>xix</sup> By Jerry Williams and Shaun Parkman (2003). We will not dwell here on some more obvious shortcomings of their paper, such as its (at times) cod sociobiologism. We are trying here to draw from it what is worthwhile, and thus taking its glass to be half-full, so as to develop out of the useful points and issues that it starts to raise a more fully adequate Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian rendition of the same terrain.

<sup>xx</sup> This term comes from Warren Goldfarb, in explicating the ‘New Wittgensteinian’ rendition of the *Tractatus* etc.. It can also be found in Wittgenstein himself, most notably in *The Voices of Wittgenstein*.

<sup>xxi</sup> It is perhaps important to point out in passing that the term ‘idealism’ here is to be heard as close to the use of that term in Marx. That is, the criticism is not of the idea that it is a good thing to be idealistic (*provided* that one is also profoundly realistic, and not in denial about *material* considerations); without at least some idealism in *that* sense, there is no basis for or enthusiasm for change. Nor is the criticism directly of ‘Idealism’ in the sense of the metaphysical system (of Fichte, Bradley, etc) commonly opposed to ‘Realism’ – though again there is a connection (for after all, Hegel too was an Idealist in this sense; and Idealists are very prone to over-emphasising the importance of mind, as opposed to that of world/body). Rather, the worry about ‘idealism’ being raised here is that it gives false hope, and can distract attention from the material (and pragmatic) considerations that are likely to govern success or failure.

<sup>xxii</sup> See for instance Ted Trainer, *The Conserver Society* (1995).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Consider this moving story of how this is possible, how the spirit of ‘Everyone is downstream’ can come to be lived: “Son after I had arrived in Ladakh, I was washing some clothes in a stream. Just as I was plunging a dirty dress into the water, a little girl, no more than seven years old, came by from a village upstream. “You can’t put your clothes in that water”, she said shyly. “People down there have to drink it”. She pointed to a village at least a mile further downstream. “You can use that one over there, that’s just for irrigation.” This is from Helena Norberg-Hodge’s remarkable and perhaps-prophetic book, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh* (London: Rider, 2000 (1991), p.24; and see the revisioning of the term ‘frugality’ on the subsequent pages.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Cf. *PI* section 116. Cf. also the approach taken by Read in chapter 6 of his 2007b; and his Handbook on ‘green’ reframing (in preparation).

<sup>xxv</sup> Cf. once more n.xxi, above.

<sup>xxvi</sup> It might be objected at this point that philosophy “leaves everything as it is” (*PI* 124) – isn’t Wittgenstein a ‘quietist’? Isn’t it quite hopeless to use him for radical political ends? But this

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is based on a misunderstanding of *PI* 124 in particular, and of Wittgenstein's philosophy in general. See Read's (2002) account of how Wittgenstein is quite compatible with and in fact a natural companion to radical political change.

<sup>xxvii</sup> For some examples of this, see for instance Tom Crompton's work, such as [http://www.wwf.org.uk/research\\_centre/research\\_centre\\_results.cfm?uNewsID=2224](http://www.wwf.org.uk/research_centre/research_centre_results.cfm?uNewsID=2224). See also <http://greenwordsworkshop.org/>, and especially Read's contribution at <http://greenwordsworkshop.org/node/7>. See also Andrew Light and Eric Katz (eds.), *Environmental Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996).

For a primer on 'ecologism' as the 'ideology' which such thinking adds up to, see Andrew Dobson's *Green political thought*.

<sup>xxviii</sup> This term is owed to Jerry Katz – see the Introduction to his (1990). 'Deflationary naturalism' is not really an 'ism' at all, in the sense that it is simply *non*-supernaturalism.

<sup>xxix</sup> For Dewey's use of this term to describe himself, see p.20 of his *Experience and Nature* (1925). For this term as describing Wittgenstein, see p.240 of Baker and Hacker (1985). Cf. also the entire argument of Read's 2004.

<sup>xxx</sup> Read's (2004) argument does not go as far as we now would. We (now) believe that weak anthropocentrism must dissolve entirely into 'Deep ecology'. For, even if one's 'main concern' is human beings, and even if one does succeed in not taking up an adversarial stance toward the planet through a fantasised alienation from it (and does not recoil into a biocentrism that tacitly *excludes* humans), then one will not be pursuing a genuinely sustainable approach unless one truly places the ecosystem first. That is to say: to care for future generations etc., it is not enough to place society as conceptually prior to the individual, and to think like a society. It is not enough, even to place society firmly in its environmental context. One has (We have) to *think like an ecosystem*. The only way in which we can have a society that can be sustained is to pursue the flourishing of the ecosystem in which the society is nested (and which it co-constitutes). A viable anthropocentrism of necessity coincides with a strong ecologism, which intrinsically values nature (including but not restricted to ourselves).

<sup>xxxi</sup> The scare-quotes are advised. See Read's (2007a).

<sup>xxxii</sup> See Chapter 1 of Read's (2007b).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For argument against the widespread misunderstanding of *PI* 124 as committing Wittgenstein to political / ideological 'neutrality' in his philosophy, see once more Read's 2002; cf. n.xxvi, above.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See his *The American evasion of philosophy*. See Read's <http://www.rupertread.fastmail.co.uk/Critical%20Notice%20of%20Cornel%20West> to avoid being confused by the provocative title of this book.

<sup>xxxv</sup> See e.g. the early chapters of *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1919).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Cf. here Williams's and Parkman's valid criticisms of Ulrich Beck, at p.457.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> See the account of William James in Stephens's (2009), which is directly salient to this point: "William James's radical empiricism and pragmatism constitutes a philosophy that can reconcile the split between intrinsic value theorists...and pragmatists who have favored a more direct emphasis on environmental policy and application." (p.228) Stephens's paper helps to dissolve the apparent clash between the need for radical change and the danger of drift toward compromise inevitably present in the concept of 'environmental pragmatism' due to Andrew Smith et al. It is crucial, of course, in all of this, not to fall into the crude misreading of Pragmatism (as a philosophical stance) as necessarily involving (excessive) compromise or an abandonment of principle.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Cf. Wittgenstein's "A philosopher is a man who has to cure many intellectual diseases in himself before he can arrive at the notions of common sense" (CV 44), and cf. also *PI* 129: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.)". Somewhat similarly, James, the philosopher who Wittgenstein cites in his *nachlass* more than

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any other, discussed with great subtlety and poignancy the sentimentalist fallacy of professing deep concern for abstract justice while being blind to concrete injustice in front of one's eyes in his *Pragmatism* lectures, and also in the *Principles of Psychology*.

<sup>xxxix</sup> See for instance Issue 5 of *Turbulence*: <http://turbulence.org.uk/>

<sup>xl</sup> Again, a small beginning in this direction is made by Read, in his *Philosophy for life: Applying Philosophy in politics and culture* (London: Continuum, 2007).

<sup>xli</sup> See e.g. George Lakoff's work

<sup>xlii</sup> See for instance the Transition Movement.

<sup>xliii</sup> And here is a great confluence with Wittgenstein, whose remark that philosophical problems are really problems of the will, not of the intellect, is nothing if not Jamesian. What is needed is a Jamesian (one might also call it a Pascalian, or Kierkegaardian) step of faith in our ability to act together successfully to change our common future into a liveable one. Without such faith, such willed-belief, our mutual destruction is assured.

<sup>xliv</sup> As explicated in our Wittgenstein-inspired book, *There is no such thing as a social science*, this is at the root of the fundamental misconception of human activity in 'social science' as predictable and delimitable. For knowledge of what is 'humanly impossible' can act as a stimulus to *make* it possible, or as a self-fulfilling prophecy (i.e. such 'knowledge' can depress us into its being true). It is 'objectively impossible' to know where human society is going, because we mutually make it, and such knowledge therefore would be self-refuting.

<sup>xlv</sup> For a lovely account of James as the apogee of this philosophical revolution, see Sydney Morgenbesser's remarks, at p.88 of Bryan Magee's *The great philosophers*. For Wittgenstein's shift to seeing the agent, the person, as the fundamental unit, rather than theory or anything like it, see our accounts of philosophical therapy as person-relative, in our (Forthcoming) and our (2010).

<sup>xlvi</sup> Also worth comparing here is Ethnomethodology, the revolutionary 'agent-centred' version of or replacement for sociology that takes society seriously but prescind from any 'expert' theorisation' thereof (expert for that of the native experts, such as coroners, magistrates, etc). Cf. e.g. chapter 3 of our *There is no such thing as a social science*. Ethnomethodology has been inspired primarily by Schutz, Merleau-Ponty - and Wittgenstein. (For a useful effort to show the significant affinities between Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology, see also Emirbayer, M. and Maynard, D. W. , 2006-08-11 "**Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology**" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal Convention Center, Montreal, Quebec, Canada Online &ltPDF>. 2009-05-24 from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p95497\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p95497_index.html) ).

<sup>xlvii</sup> See Hutchinson 2008 "Emotions-Philosophy-Science", in Gustafsson, Kronkvist and McEachrane (eds).

<sup>xlviii</sup> There is much debate over the most appropriate term for this group of theorists, for an overview see Hutchinson 2008.

<sup>xlix</sup> See, for example, Prinz 2003b: 5 and Solomon 2003a: 12.

<sup>1</sup> It's telling to note, given the widely-held assumption that Wittgenstein was an anti-Jamesian proto-cognitivist (see, for example, Griffiths (1997) account of the emergence of cognitivism in Kenny's *Action, Emotion & Will*) that Wittgenstein would find neither of the options presented by James to be satisfactory. Both options, as presented in the quote from James, suggest or imply a mind-body dualism. A truly Wittgensteinian (dis-)solution, compatible we suggest with the best of the spirit of Pragmatism (with for instance the Jamesian right-to-believe; the Deweyan emphases on human animals as through-and-through envired, as through-and-through not subjects facing objects, as through-and-through not in need of a quest for certainty conceived of as knowledge-immune-to-doubt; the Peircean suggestion that belief is not really belief unless it be articulated into action (so long as this is not a tacit behavioristic claim, but rather a kind of *moral* or *political* one: on what basis are you (and are you not)

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prepared to act?); and so forth), is in another dimension, eventuating in what we shall collect under the heading of 'world-taking cognitivism'.

<sup>li</sup> Of course, one typical fear response, is flight (fleeing the threat). This is simply not an option in this context. It seems the option left to us is to fight, which would in this context entail forgoing certain luxuries to which we have become accustomed so as to bring about the change required to mitigate the threat. That is correct: but it doesn't usually feel like fighting ('the climate war'). This is where (for instance) reframing and the normalisation of new practices come in.

<sup>lii</sup> For such rejection, see for instance the March 2008 (25:2) special issue of *Theory, Culture and Society* on (criticisms of) Cognitivism.

<sup>liii</sup> Cf. *On Certainty* sections 472-4.

<sup>liv</sup> If Wittgenstein is a quietist, and if Pragmatism is an apologia for the status quo with minor mods, then they cannot help us. But if Wittgensteinian-Pragmatist thinking leads into a practice that takes practice seriously and that helps us take the world in accord with our nature as embodied emotional dependent and interdependent social animals, and helps us resist the allures of taking the world down with us by refusing our nature, as most philosophies hitherto have, then it *can* signpost the way. (For more on our nature in a broadly Wittgenstein/Pragmatist light, see once more Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, and Alisdair MacIntyre's *Dependent rational animals*.)